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## Expanding Textile Studies Through the use of a University Costume Collection

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## **Expanding Textile Studies Through the use of a University Costume Collection**

by Gayle Strege

The Historic Costume & Textiles Collection at The Ohio State University (OSU) is a research facility in the Consumer & Textile Sciences Department of the College of Human Ecology. Begun as a teaching tool by the Textiles and Clothing faculty in the 1940s, the Collection now numbers over 10,000 artifacts, including men's, women's and children's clothing and accessories dating from the eighteenth century to the present day, and textiles ranging from pre-Columbian archeological fragments to European Renaissance liturgical textiles, to twentieth century furnishing fabrics.

Clothing is inseparable from textiles, since it is predominantly made of the latter, and the qualities of the textile have a profound effect on the behavior of a garment. Over 1000 costume and textile artifacts are used annually in classroom teaching, exhibitions, and research at OSU. The curriculum includes courses in textile chemistry, textile physics, historic costume, and historic textiles. Artifacts from the Collection are prime examples of full-scale end-use textile fibers and structures. A full garment is a much more effective representation of a textile's qualities than a 2 x 3" swatch, and an actual garment is better than a picture.

Our recent exhibition, *Textile Treasures*, highlighted significant selections from the Collection, and also featured student research. Through the various textiles selected, the exhibition explored textile history and its relationship to social and cultural history, techniques utilized in textile manufacturing and embellishment, and end-use of textiles, including 2-dimensional textiles draped or wrapped around the body.

Gayle Strege is currently the curator for the Historic Costume & Textiles Collection at The Ohio State University, having previously worked in the Hope B. McCormick Costume Center of the Chicago Historical Society. She received her MA in Museum Studies from the Fashion Institute of Technology after a prior career in theatrical costuming. Ms Strege has curated several exhibitions, and has consulted on costume mounts for exhibitions, including The American Textile History Museum's *Textiles in America*, and The Wexner Center for the Arts' *Julie Taymor: Playing with Fire*.